

comments should identify the docket and notice numbers stated in the heading of this notice. Anyone desiring confirmation of mailed comments must include a self-addressed stamped postcard.

ADDRESSES: The Dockets Facility is located on the plaza level, Room PL-401, of the U.S. Department of Transportation building, 400 7th St., SW, Washington, DC. It is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mike Israni (tel: 202-366-4571; E-mail: mike.israni@rspa.dot.gov). You can access additional information and participate in a discussion forum at the OPS pipeline system integrity management Internet site at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On November 18-19, 1999, the Office of Pipeline Safety held a public meeting to discuss the need for additional safety and environmental regulations for pipelines in high-consequence areas (i.e., areas where a pipeline failure could have serious consequences for the public or the environment). The notice announcing the meeting was published on October 21, 1999, at 64 FR 56725. OPS wanted information on pipeline operators' system integrity management programs so that it could incorporate a process into the regulations for validating pipeline system integrity in high-consequence areas. OPS is committed to enhancing protection in these areas for several reasons. OPS and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigations and analyses of major pipeline incidents have underscored the importance of protecting areas of high population density and environmentally sensitive areas. Congressional mandates have directed OPS to undertake various activities in these areas, including requiring periodic pipeline inspections in areas of high population density and in areas unusually sensitive to environmental damage.

Recent OPS initiatives have validated the importance of focusing pipeline resources and establishing higher levels of protection in areas where a pipeline accident could have serious consequences. OPS has seen a wide array of existing operator safety programs that identify, assess, and address all significant risks to the pipeline in an integrated manner. These operator-developed programs closely examine in-line inspection survey data, together with other surveillance and

operating data, (e.g., expected population growth, land use, construction activity along the pipeline) and other information relevant to ensuring the integrity of the pipeline in high population areas and in environmentally sensitive areas.

Need for Extending Comment Period and Opening Electronic Discussion Forum

The November public meeting gathered information from government, industry, and public participants on integrity management programs and how to deal with integrity issues in high-consequence areas. The meeting provided a wealth of information on identifying high-consequence areas, testing and inspection technologies, and using risk data to manage pipeline system integrity. The meeting revealed the complexity inherent in requiring integrity management inspections and programs in high-consequence areas. Breakout sessions addressed the following issues:

- What are the key elements and characteristics of integrity management within companies?
- What are the characteristics of high-consequence areas?
- What are the minimum standards for integrity management programs?
- What elements should OPS review, evaluate, and inspect?
- What means are used to assemble and integrate information?
- What types of information need to be integrated to ensure pipeline system integrity?
- What are the key questions for OPS to ask during an inspection?

At the meeting, OPS announced that written comments on pipeline system integrity management issues would be accepted through December 20, 1999. The questions raised at the public meeting and subsequent discussions with the pipeline industry and regulators have shown that more time is needed to prepare and file comments. Therefore, we are extending the comment period to January 17, 2000. We are also setting up an electronic discussion forum so that we can get a free exchange of ideas on how to implement a pipeline system integrity management process into the pipeline safety regulations. This forum will be open until at least January 17, 2000. The transcript of the November 18-19, 1999, public meeting and public comments concerning issues raised at the meeting are available in the docket, which is accessible at the Dockets Facility or through the OPS pipeline system integrity management Internet site.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

49 CFR Parts 192 and 195

[Docket No. RSPA-99-6355; Notice 2]—7

Pipeline Safety: Enhanced Safety and Environmental Protection for Gas Transmission and Hazardous Liquid Pipelines in High-Consequence Areas

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice extending comment period and establishing Electronic Public Discussion Forum.

SUMMARY: This notice announces that the Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS) will extend to January 17, 2000, the comment period following the public meeting on pipeline system integrity programs in high-consequence areas. This notice also announces that OPS is establishing an electronic public discussion forum on pipeline system integrity management. OPS requests comments that address how to provide additional safety and environmental protection for gas transmission pipelines and hazardous liquid pipelines in high-consequence areas through regulated integrity management programs.

DATES: No later than January 17, 2000, comments can be submitted over the Internet to the OPS integrity management site at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>. You may also submit written comments by mail or delivery directly to the Dockets Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590-0001. Comments may be submitted directly to the docket at the following Internet Web address: <http://dms.dot.gov>. Click on "Help & Information" for instructions on how to file a document electronically. All

After the public meeting, OPS began discussing a conceptual model for ensuring extra protection in high-consequence areas. This model, along with additional information on the public meeting and on pipeline system integrity management issues for high-consequence areas, is posted on OPS's pipeline system integrity management Internet site at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>. Information on this site includes:

- General Summary of the November 18, 1999 public meeting
- Discussion page for facilitating communication
- **Federal Register** Notice on the November 18, 1999 public meeting
- Meeting Agenda and selected presentations/summaries by various speakers.
- Meeting transcripts for November 18, 1999 public meeting
- Summary of the Breakout sessions
- Conceptual pipeline system integrity management model for high-consequence areas
- Link to the DMS page for submissions to the electronic docket
- Contact (e-mail) information for Mike Israni and Beth Callsen

RSPA encourages all interested persons to access the pipeline system integrity management conceptual model and other background information at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>.

In particular, OPS wants comment on how to improve protection for the public and the environment for pipelines located in high-consequence areas through a more integrated approach to identifying and addressing risks. Interested persons are urged to present their views on whether and what additional inspection requirements or other preventive and mitigative actions are needed to ensure adequate protection of high-consequence areas. Comments are sought from pipeline companies on the extent of their inspection and testing programs, the types of inspection tools employed, and experience with intervals between inspections and testing. OPS is also interested in comments on the expected cumulative costs and benefits associated with implementing a pipeline system integrity management process, on whether any of these measures would have a disproportionate impact on small operators, and any concerns on the information collection, recordkeeping, or reporting requirements of this initiative under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 USC 3057(d)).

Authority: 49 U.S.C. Chapter 601 and 49 CFR 1.53.

Issued in Washington, DC on December 17, 1999.

Richard B. Felder,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

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